

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ROME 004048

SIPDIS

FROM FODAG

DEPARTMENT FOR IO, PRM, DEPT. PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA,
USDA/FAS (CHAMBLISS), VIENNA ALSO FOR UNVIE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AORC](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [FAO](#) [WFP](#) [WHO](#) [UNAORC](#) [FAO](#) [WFP](#) [WHO](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: DG DIOUF SPEAKS TO US PERMREP ON GM FOOD ISSUES
BUT REFUSES TO SPEAK OUT IN PUBLIC

REF: A) ROME 3899, B) USUN 1978, C) STATE 147644, D)
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 04048 01 OF 02 191545Z
ROME 3676, E) LUSAKA 01343

1. SUMMARY - US MISSION REPRESENTATIVES MET WITH FAO
DG JACQUES DIOUF TO DISCUSS FAO'S ROLE IN THE
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. WE URGED
FAO TO TAKE A PUBLIC STANCE ON BIOTECH FOODS TO
CLARIFY MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF POLITICAL LEADERS
BASED, AT LEAST IN PART, ON MISINFORMATION
DISSEMINATED BY FAO REPRESENTATIVES IN THE SUB-
REGION. DIOUF, IN A JOINT LETTER FROM WHO DG
BRUNDTLAND TO WFP ED MORRIS, PROPOSES A UN POLICY
WHICH, IN OUR VIEW, RAISES MORE DOUBTS ABOUT THE
POTENTIAL RISK OF CONSUMING U.S. FOOD AID THAN IT
SETTLES. END SUMMARY

2. ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AND US MISSION
AGRICULTURAL COUNSELOR MET WITH FAO DIRECTOR
GENERAL JACQUES DIOUF ON AUGUST 16 TO DISCUSS
FAO'S ROLE IN QUELLING THE GROWING
MISUNDERSTANDING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA OF BIOTECH
FOOD AID BEING OFFERED BY THE UNITED STATES
THROUGH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM. U.S. REPS
REITERATED OUR REQUEST MADE IN PREVIOUS DEMARCHES
TO FAO THAT THE FAO COMMUNICATE THAT, TO THE BEST
OF ITS KNOWLEDGE, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY RISK
TO HUMAN HEALTH FROM BIOTECH FOODS, SPECIFICALLY
FROM FOOD AID SHIPMENTS IN RECENT YEARS BY THE
FAO. US REPS CITED MISINFORMATION STILL BEING
DISSEMINATED BY THE FAO (ZIMBABWE IS A CASE IN
POINT).

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 ROME 04048 01 OF 02 191545Z

3. DIOUF'S RESPONSE WAS BUREAUCRATIC AND DEFENSIVE.
FAO CANNOT GET OUT IN FRONT OF WFP WHICH HAS BEEN
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITY OF COORDINATING THE UN
RESPONSE TO THE EMERGENCY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA, HE SAID. FURTHERMORE, QUESTIONS OF HUMAN
HEALTH SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO WHO, NOT FAO. HE
SAID FAO HAD CORRECTED INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE
FIELD, BUT WOULD NOT PROMISE TO REITERATE THAT
CORRECTION. AND THE FAO HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF
BIOTECH FOOD BEING INCLUDED IN ANY SHIPMENTS OF
FOOD AID TO DATE. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES WAS
NAIVE TO THINK THAT MERE INFORMATION COULD QUELL
CONCERNS, THAT THERE WERE VARIOUS POLITICAL ACTORS
BEHIND THE CURRENT FUROR IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN
COUNTRIES.

4. THE WRITTEN REPLY FROM DIOUF AND WHO DG BRUNTLAND
PLACES RESPONSIBILITY FOR RISK ASSESSMENT ON
RECIPIENT COUNTRIES SINCE FAO HAS NOT UNDERTAKEN
SUCH AN ASSESSMENT. IT STATES THAT, "BASED ON
NATIONAL INFORMATION FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES FAO
AND WHO SHARE THE VIEW THAT THE CONSUMPTION OF GM
COMMODITIES CURRENTLY ON THE MARKET IS NOT LIKELY
TO PRESENT AN APPRECIABLE HUMAN HEALTH RISK," BUT
GOES ON TO RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION OF PROCESSING
TECHNIQUES SUCH AS MILLING. IT CALLS ON
RECIPIENTS TO "WEIGH THE SEVERE AND IMMEDIATE
CONSEQUENCES OF INSUFFICIENT FOOD SUPPLIES AGAINST
THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH
FROM CONSUMING FOODS DERIVED FROM MODERN
BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE ADDITIONAL RISK TO

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 ROME 04048 01 OF 02 191545Z
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE."
IT CITES THE ONGOING PROCESS IN CODEX ALIMENTARIUS
WHICH IS EXPECTED TO RESULT IN GUIDELINES ON FOOD
SAFETY IN ANOTHER YEAR OR SO.

5. THE FAO HAS BEEN UNHELPFUL IN SEVERAL ASPECTS. US
REPRESENTATIVES POINTED OUT THAT FAO HAD APPROVED
OF PREVIOUS SHIPMENTS OF FOOD AID WHICH, IN ALL

LIKELIHOOD, HAD CONTAINED BIOTECH FOOD SINCE IT WAS INTRODUCED IN THE MID-1990'S IN THE U.S. DIOUF DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH CONTENT. DIOUF ALSO PURPORTED TO BE UNAWARE OF THE TOWN MEETING IN LUSAKA REPORTED REFTEL AND SEEMED NOT TO UNDERSTAND THAT FAO'S VOICE COULD HAVE PLAYED A POSITIVE ROLE, AS DID WFP'S. (U.S. MISSION REPRESENTATIVES CONFIRMED WITH FAO OFFICES IN ROME THAT NO RANKING REPRESENTATIVE OF FAO WAS PRESENT AT THE LUSAKA MEETING, ONLY A NOTETAKER.) DIOUF DID SAY THAT FAO HAD TAKEN PROMPT ACTION TO CORRECT THE MISINFORMATION REPORTED BY USAID

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ4616

PAGE 01 ROME 04048 02 OF 02 191546Z
ACTION IO-00

INFO LOG-00 AF-00 AGRE-00 AID-00 WHA-00 EB-00 EUR-00
UTED-00 TEDE-00 OES-01 OIC-02 TEST-00 PRM-00 SAS-00
/003W

-----DB22AF 191546Z /03

O 191506Z AUG 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5452
INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
SADC COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 ROME 004048

SIPDIS

FROM FODAG

DEPARTMENT FOR IO, PRM, DEPT. PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA,
USDA/FAS (CHAMBLISS), VIENNA ALSO FOR UNVIE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AORC](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [FAO](#) [WFP](#) [WHO](#) [UNAORC](#) [FAO](#) [WFP](#) [WHO](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: DG DIOUF SPEAKS TO US PERMREP ON GM FOOD ISSUES
BUT REFUSES TO SPEAK OUT IN PUBLIC

HARARE AND ASKED US TO PROVIDE ANY OTHER EXAMPLES.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 04048 02 OF 02 191546Z
HE WOULD NOT PROMISE, HOWEVER, TO REITERATE THE
CORRECTION TO EARLIER MISINFORMATION SENT BY FAO
TO OCHA TO MAKE SURE IT RECEIVED WIDER
DISTRIBUTION.

16. COMMENT - US MISSION BELIEVES THIS ISSUE HAS REACHED A CRUCIAL STATE. FAO HAS NOT BEEN HELPFUL IN REACHING A POSITIVE RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA CRISIS. THIS HAS BECOME EVEN MORE SERIOUS IN LIGHT OF ZAMBIA'S DECISION AUGUST 16 TO REJECT BIOTECH FOOD AID, SPECIFICALLY U.S. CORN. WE BELIEVE THAT FAO SHOULD HAVE COMMUNICATED THAT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THERE IS NO RISK TO HUMAN HEALTH FROM CONSUMING BIOTECH FOOD AND THAT THOSE RECEIVING FOOD AID THROUGH WFP HAVE NOT REPORTED ANY NEGATIVE HEALTH EFFECTS. INSTEAD, FAO FIELD REPRESENTATIVES HAVE CONTINUED TO TRANSMIT INACCURATE INFORMATION ON BIOTECH FOOD AND TO MISINTERPRET THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL RAISING NEEDLESS DOUBTS AND FEAR. WE REGRET THAT FAO HAS NOT PROVIDED MEMBER GOVERNMENTS THE BENEFIT OF ITS SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE IN THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY CRISIS. ALTHOUGH FAO CONTINUES TO CHARACTERIZE THE SITUATION IN TERMS OF MALNUTRITION, WE BELIEVE THAT LIVES WILL BE LOST AS A RESULT OF FAO'S FAILURE TO ACT IN TIME. END COMMENT.

HEILEMAN

UNCLASSIFIED

>
2002ROME04048 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED